

Before the  
POSTAL REGULATORY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20268-0001

Spanish Fort Post Office  
Spanish Fort, AL

Docket No. A2021-1

PUBLIC REPRESENTATIVE RESPONSE SUPPORTING  
APPLICATION TO SUSPEND CLOSURE

(January 12, 2021)

On December 28, 2020, the City of Spanish Fort, Alabama (Petitioner) appealed the Postal Service's determination to close the Spanish Fort post office located in Spanish Fort, Alabama, 36527.<sup>1</sup> The Petitioner concurrently filed a Participant Statement and an application to suspend the closing pending resolution of this appeal,<sup>2</sup> which is supported by members of Congress.<sup>3</sup> The Spanish Fort post office is scheduled to close on January 15, 2021. The Public Representative submits this response supporting Petitioner's Application to Suspend.

39 U.S.C. § 404(d)(5) provides the Commission authority to "suspend the effectiveness of the determination of the Postal Service until the final disposition of the appeal." The Public Representative agrees with the Petitioner that "[w]hen balancing the interest of the parties ... the potential harm caused by the immediate closing of the Spanish Fort Post Office far outweighs any inconvenience or negative impact to the Postal Service" that may be caused by delaying the closing pending the review of this appeal. See Application to Suspend at 4. The Postal Service could extend the contract for operating the Spanish Fort post office as it has done previously.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, persons served by the

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<sup>1</sup> In the Matter of Spanish Fort, Alabama 36527 / Appeal of Postal Service Determination to Close Spanish Fort Post Office, December 28, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Participant Statement, December 28, 2020; Application for Suspension of the Determination of the Postal Service to Close the Spanish Fort Post Office, December 28, 2020 (Application to Suspend).

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Letter from Jerry L. Carl, House of Representatives, January 11, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> United States Postal Service Motion to Dismiss the Proceedings, January 7, 2021, at 3.

Spanish Fort post office would be irreparably harmed if the Postal Service closes the post office because it would be almost impossible to reopen if the Commission remands the Postal Service's determination for further consideration.

Keeping the Spanish Fort post office open during the pandemic would further the public interest. The pandemic has limited in person communications, leaving post offices as one of the few safe ways for people to communicate. Residents in the community rely on the Spanish Fort post office because many of them are senior citizens who lack access to the Internet or a computer. Closing the Spanish Fort post office would cause these residents significant hardship during this difficult time. However, keeping the Spanish Fort post office open during the pandemic would further the public interest by maintaining communication and access to postal services in rural or remote areas.

The Public Representative observes that closing the Spanish Fort post office would drive customer traffic to other post offices, which may cause overcrowding. Keeping the Spanish Fort post office open would promote public health and safety by preventing crowds at other post offices and maintaining social distancing requirements.

Respectfully submitted,

Katrina R. Martinez

Public Representative